

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIA-06 A-01 CU-02 AID-05 /023 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6100

INFO AMEMBASSY KIGALI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, SCUL, BY, US

SUBJECT: FUTURE OF USIS CULTURAL CENTER IN BUJUMBURA

1. I HAVE BEEN VERY ENCOURAGED TO LEARN THAT, ON THE OCCASION OF AMBASSADOR QUANTON'S RECENT CONSULTATION IN WASHINGTON, THE QUESTION OF ADEQUATE USIA SUPPORT FOR USIS ACTIVITIES CARRIED ON BY SEVEN "UNDERPRIVILEGED" U.S. EMBASSIES IN AFRICA WAS RAISED DIRECTLY WITH AMBASSADOR REINHARDT. I HOPE THAT THIS CAN BE FOLLOWED BY A REVIEW OF THE RATIONALE WHICH HAS JUSTIFIED VERY LIMITED USIA BUDGETARY SUPPORT TO THESE POSTS, AND WHICH HAS DENIED THEM THE SERVICES OF A REGULAR PAO.

2. AS I SEARCH THE LIST OF THE SEVEN -- BANGUI, BANJUL, BUJUMBURA, KIGALI, MBABANE, NOUAKCHOTT, AND PORT LOUIS, I CANNOT DISCOVER ANY COMMON THREAD TO EXPLAIN THEIR SEMI-PARIAH STATUS IN USIA. MBABANE DOES NOT LOOK MUCH DIFFERENT FROM MASERU; BANGUI GENERALLY RESEMBLES LOME; AND I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT KIGALI AND BUJUMBURA DO NOT REPRESENT VERY DIFFERENT U.S. INTERESTS FROM,

SAY, FREETOWN OR OUAGADOUGOU. THUS, IT MUST BE A SERIES OF INDIVIDUAL HISTORICAL ACCIDENTS, BURIED SOMEWHERE IN POST OR USIA FILES, THAT CAN EXPLAIN WHY USIA WILL NOT SEND ONE OF ITS OFFICERS TO THE UNLUCKY SEVEN, AND WHY THEY ARE KEPT ON SHORT RATIONS IN ANNUAL FUNDING.

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3. I RECOGNIZE PERFECTLY WELL THAT, IN A NUMBER OF THE SMALLER AFRICAN COUNTRIES INCLUDING BURUNDI, AMERICAN INTERESTS ARE MODEST, EVEN WHEN ONE TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S SOMEWHAT INCREASED EMPHASIS ON AID TO AFRICA, THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, ACCOMMODATION IN THE UN CONTEXT, ETC. THE ELITES AND SCHOOL YOUTH IN THOSE NATIONS ARE RELATIVELY SMALL, AND WE DO NOT REPRESENT NEED

MAJOR AND COSTLY PROGRAMS TO GET THE WORD ACROSS TO TARGET AUDIENCES. HOWEVER, EVEN A MODEST USIS EFFORT SHOULD CONTAIN THE FULL RANGE OF LIBRARY, FILM LOAN, PUBLICATIONS DISTRIBUTION, AND ENGLISH TEACHING SERVICES, AS WELL AS OCCASIONAL CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS, EXHIBITS, AND FILM/VTR SHOWS AT THE CULTURAL CENTER ITSELF. MOREOVER, THE AVAILABILITY OF AN EXPERIENCED FSIO, WHO ALSO HAS A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE USIA HEADQUARTERS RESOURCES ON WHICH HE CAN DRAW, IS A KEY FACTOR IN DETERMINING WHETHER THE USG IS GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE FUNDS WHICH IT IS INVESTING AT THE POST.

4. THE SITUATION WILL VARY IN EACH COUNTRY, BUT ALL OF US ARE TRYING TO OVERCOME OR PALLIATE A GREATER OR LESSER NUMBER OF REAL OR IMAGINED RESENTMENTS AND GRIEVANCES TOWARD THE U.S. FELT BY HOST COUNTRY ELITES. THE LABEL "IMPERIALIST" HAS GAINED WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE; OUR GRADUALIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOLVING SOUTHERN AFRICA'S BLACK-WHITE PROBLEMS AROUSES SUSPICIONS; AND OUR WEALTH ADDS TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS. WE HAVE A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO EVERYWHERE IF WE JUST WANT TO STAY EVEN, MUCH LESS SCORE SOME NET ADVANCE. AND, AS THE AFRICAN ELITES GET MORE IN TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER TO EXCHANGE IDEAS AS WELL AS BUSINESS, WE WILL FIND THAT IT PAYS TO PURSUE THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM EVERYWHERE, ON A SCALE APPROPRIATE TO THE PLACE.

5. BURUNDI FITS INTO THE GENERAL PATTERN. IT HAS A POVERTY OF INFORMATIONAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES, AND EVEN ITS ELITE GROUPS HAVE MAJOR LACUNAE IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF PAST HISTORY AND CURRENT FACTS ON MATTERS RELEVANT TO THE AMERICAN IMAGE AND TO BURUNDI'S ATTITUDES TOWARD US. AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF ROUGH RELATIONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN SOME RESPECTS DATING BACK OVER A DECADE, I THINK THAT WE ARE GETTING TO THE STAGE WHERE EACH SIDE WANTS SOME CAUTIOUS COOPERATION, AS A TEST OF WHAT FURTHER POTENTIAL FOR CLOSER TIES MAY BE POSSIBLE IN THE FUTURE. THUS, IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, WE HAVE REVIVED SELF-HELP, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, AND CRS ACTIVITIES, AND HAVE RENEWED DISCUSSION OF POLITICAL TOPICS. AT THE MOMENT, WE ARE GETTING OUR FIRST BILATERAL USAID PROJECT UNDER WAY. THESE MOVES NEED THE SUPPORT WHICH USIS OPERATIONS CAN PROVIDE.

6. THROUGH STATE (AF) COLLABORATION WITH USIA, WE HAVE MANAGED TO KEEP OUR CULTURAL CENTER GOING AT A FULL SERVICE LEVEL IN FY 76 AND 77, WHEN THE USIA PREFERENCE WAS TO CUT OUT LIBRARY, ENGLISH TEACHING, AND CULTURAL PRESENTATION FUNCTIONS. I HOPE THAT FOR FY 78, USIA WILL BE WILLING AGAIN TO RESUME ITS PROPER STATUTORY ROLE OF GIVING FULL FUNDING FOR OUR FULL SERVICE CENTER. HOWEVER, WE STILL NEED THE RETURN OF A PAO, WHOSE POSITION HAS NOT BEEN OCCUPIED SINCE EARLY 1973. TO BE SURE, WE HAVE BEEN VERY FORTUNATE IN HAVING AN EXPERIENCED BELGIAN NATIONAL AS THE MANAGER OF USIS OPERATIONS HERE, AND, IN THAT, WE HAVE

BEEN LUCKIER THAN SOME (OR PERHAPS ALL) OF THE DISADVANTAGED SEVEN. SHE KNOWS THE WASHINGTON SETUP QUITE WELL, AND HAS MANY SOUND IDEAS FOR MAKING THE MOST OUT OF LIMITED RESOURCES.

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7. NONETHELESS, AN AMERICAN PAO CAN PUT HIMSELF FORWARD IN LOCAL CIRCLES TO REPRESENT THE UNITED STATES IN A WAY THAT NO THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL CAN HOPE TO DO. CONTACTS WITH BURUNDI MEDIA (SUCH AS THEY ARE), INFORMATION OFFICIALS, AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES COULD ALL BE REVIVED IN AN AUTHORITATIVE WAY. A PAO WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE MORE CURRENT AND DEEPER KNOWLEDGE OF USIA PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND FACILITIES, RELEVANT TO USE OR APPLICATION IN BURUNDI. WE HAVE BEEN HUGELY IMPRESSED BY THE IMPACT WHICH A TALENTED LIVE-WIRE DIRECTOR OF THE FRENCH CULTURAL SCENTER HAS HAD IN BUJUMBURA SINCE HIS ARRIVAL A YEAR AGO. OF COURSE, WE ARE NEITHER A FRANCOPHONE COUNTRY NOR ALL THAT MUCH INTERESTED IN PROMOTING CULTURAL BLOCKBUSTERS HERE. STILL, HIS SUCCESS IN INTERESTING SENIOR OFFICIALDOM IN HIS CENTER'S PROJECTS (WHICH HE ORIENTS TOWARDS BURUNDI'S OWN PREOCCUPATIONS) SHOWS THAT THERE ARE UNTAPPED POSSIBILITIES FOR US AS WELL.

8. THE PAO WHOM WE HAVE IN MIND COULD WELL BE A FAIRLY JUNIOR OFFICER IN HIS THIRTIES, AND IT WOULD BE QUITE ALL RIGHT IF HIS USIA EXPERIENCE HAD PREVIOUSLY CONCENTRATED ON ONE OR TWO FIELDS, SUCH AS LIBRARY SERVICE AND ENGLISH TEACHING, EVEN THOUGH WE WOULD WANT HIM TO TRY HIS HAND AT ALL ASPECTS OF USIS WORK. ALTHOUGH HE WOULD BE RESIDENT IN BUJUMBURA AND CONCENTRATE ON UPGRADING OUR EFFECTIVENESS HERE, THERE WOULD BE NO REASON WHY HE SHOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE FROM TIME TO TIME BOTH TO SPEND A FEW DAYS IN KIGALI (IN LINE WITH AMBASSADOR CRIGLER'S REQUEST IN HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECENT PARM MESSAGE) UNTIL KIGALI RECEIVED ITS OWN FULL TIME
APO. HE COULD ALSO SUPPORT AN ATTEMPT TO REVIVE THE BUKAVU
CONSULATE'S LIBRARY, WHICH HAS BEEN KEPT OPERATING, IN SPITE
OF A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF USIA SUPPORT.
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